

February 19, 2017

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Messenger: Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Approach God's Throne of Grace"

—The Secret to Overcome Difficulties—

Text: Hebrews 4:14~16

4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

4:16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Introduction

- **We sometimes experience surprises in our life. However, surprises are sometimes necessary. Last summer, KIBC church members celebrated the 40th anniversary of our ministry before we went on a missionary journey to the United States. The surprise party was secretly planned so we didn't know about it at all.**
- **After the Sunday worship, we were told to wait in a room and not to come into where we usually eat lunch. After a while we were allowed to come in the room that was prepared for the 40th anniversary party. ⇒ It was a surprise.**
- **Brothers and sisters offered congratulations to us. We also received congratulatory messages from people outside of our church through DVD messages, from Oasis Church, Chapel Kohituji in Japan and messages from Germany, Australia and so on. Our three sons and their families (three daughters-in-law and 6 grandchildren) sent us congratulations. It was a greatly impressive and thankful experience.**
- **We have experienced various things during 40 years. I recalled God's calling in Duesseldorf, offering my life to God, ministries in communist countries, foundation of the Voice of Mission, SIBS International church, KIBC that was developed from ministry for business men and so on and I was overwhelmed by a flood of emotions. God used a small thing like me for His work. I just give thanks for the Lord's grace and mercy.**

1 . My friends, we have surprises in our daily life. Some surprises make us feel sad and painful. We sometimes think, "Why should I face such a painful thing?" When some one asks , "Why does God allow to occur such unreasonable things?" "Why does God allow someone to be killed without any reason?" we don't know how to answer them.

- Christians don't know everything. When something unreasonable happens, we get

confused about the problem. However, we know that we shouldn't feel hopeless and to give up. We have Jesus the Son of God, a great High Priest who has ascended into heaven. He has been tempted in every way just as we are. Therefore, we don't need to become discouraged. The Word of God encourages us that we should hold firmly to the faith we profess.

2. By the way, Judaism has the so called three main pillars. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews demonstrated that Jesus Christ is superior to them. The three main pillars refer to ① angels ② Moses and ③ Aaron and the Levite liturgy. We have already studied that Jesus the Son of God is superior to ① angels and ② Moses.
 - The author of the epistle devoted more space to explain thro Aaron and the Levite lineage (4:14~10:18) The reason is that Judaism has developed ugh Aaron and the Levite liturgy. And he explained that Jesus was much superior to Aaron in various points.
 - Today's text demonstrates that Jesus is much superior to Aaron and the Levite ritual.

Main Points

1. The True High Priest

1) The Priesthood

4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

- The Bible records that Aaron, Moses' brother, became the first high priest. Only Aaron's descendants succeeded to the priesthood. A priest was a special person who was able to come before God as a representative of the entire Israelite community.
- Let's read the following passages of the Old Testament.

Exodus 25

25:8 Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.

The Israelites, who left Egypt, made a tabernacle for God in the wilderness. It was before they built a temple. The tabernacle was a sanctuary where God dwelt in. The Israelites were commanded to worship God there. **The most important work of Aaron, the first priest, was to perform a ritual for forgiveness of the Israelites and himself so that they were able to come before God who is holy.** It was performed on an atonement day. The Book of Leviticus records as below—

16:33 and make atonement for the Most Holy Place, for the tent of meeting and the altar, and for the priests and all the members of the community.

16:34 This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites.

- **The precious work of a priest was to perform a ritual by offering an animal for forgiveness of the Israelites, including him.** Like this, the priesthood began with

Aaron's performance. It had succeeded from the days of a tabernacle to the days of Temple in Jerusalem. (God's plan for the Israelites passed down to a tabernacle, a temple and church.) The Israelites, who lived the days of a tabernacle and a temple, came before God through a priest. It was the work of priest who lived in the days of the Old Testament. (The Temple of Jerusalem was broken down by the Roman Army in A.D. 70.)

- When we read the Bible we come to understand that a priest who served at a tabernacle and a temple is a model of Jesus Christ who is the true High Priest. Unlike Aaron, Jesus Christ is the true High Priest. Jesus is the great High Priest who has ascended into **heaven**. Jesus does not work for people in an earthly tabernacle like Aaron, but He works for us in a tabernacle in heaven today.
- Then, what is Jesus like?

2) Jesus the High Priest, who has ascended into heaven

4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

- What does **heaven** mean? It is said that the Jews at that time thought that heaven was in tiers. Some thought it was in three tiers and others thought in seven tiers.
- We may think that such kind of idea is childish. However, their thinking was acceptable before a natural science developed. Today, we divide things into the natural world and the supernatural world. Paul called the supernatural world **heaven**.
- My friends, a term **heaven** in the Bible has various meanings as below —
 - ① **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1:1**
The heavens above refers to everything except the earth.
 - ② **"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." Matthew 6:9**
The term above is used by comparison with this world. It means that heaven is God's throne and this world is the place that the devil controls.
 - ③ **"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Ephesians 6:12**
The verse refers to the supernatural world different from ① and ②.
- And heaven in Chapter 4:14 refers to the one in ③. The author means that Jesus experienced everything. It means that **"one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are." (4:15b)**
- This epistle was written for the Jewish Christians who believed Jesus as Christ. Therefore, they easily understood terms like priest, heaven and redemption. The author taught that Jesus Christ was the true High Priest and he continues to teach who Jesus was.

2. Jesus the Son of God, who Became a Human

4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our

weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

1) Jesus who had been tempted (tests)

- My friends, Jesus is the merciful High Priest and He can help us because He has been tempted like us. We sometimes suffer torments that cannot be put into words. It is fortunate if we have friends who speak words of comfort and encouragement when we have pain.
- However, we sometimes feel that their encouragement or comfort are superficial words. We think, "Nobody understand my pain", "I don't think that you ever understand my suffering" or "I don't want to hear words of sympathy from you, a happy person." However, a word from a person who experienced the same suffering becomes deep comfort and encouragement.
- Jesus Christ **has been tempted in every way, just as we are. (4:15b)** We don't always have the same experience that other people have. Some people experience things that we don't experience, whereas we experience things that others don't.
- However, Jesus is quite different from us. He experienced everything. It means that he ascended **heaven**. We may be tempted by a monetary problem, a sexual problem, fame, power and authority. Each of us may be tempted by different things. However, even though one is tempted, no one experiences every kind of temptation .
- However, Jesus Christ was tempted in every way. Therefore, the Bible definitely records, "**we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses.**" (4:15a)
- Jesus' coming to this world as a human being means that He had the weakness of a human being. The Bible teaches, "**When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.**" (James 1:13)
The fact that Jesus was tempted shows that Jesus took a human nature.
- My friends, being tempted or feeling of temptation is not a sin itself. We are tempted. However, when we are led into a temptation, we commit a sin. Therefore, it is important to deal with temptation.

2) The secret to overcome temptations (tests)

Then, what should we do to overcome temptations?

Hebrews

12:2 Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

- Jesus was tempted three times by Satan in the wilderness. And Jesus was tested, "**You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself!" Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:40)**
Jesus was not overcome by a great temptation.
- Jesus came to this world and led a life as a human being . He was tested in every way like us but He did not sin. Aaron was different from Jesus in this point. Jesus Christ is the true High Priest.

- My friends, we easily give into temptation. We don't need power to give into it, on the contrary we need a great deal of power to overcome temptations and we can't overcome temptations by only power.
- We overcome sin through a desperate fight. Jesus also furiously fought against Satan's attacking. Satan made concentrated attacks on Jesus. It was beyond of our imagination. Jesus gained a victory over Satan. We can't thank God enough for giving Jesus as our Savior, who is a winner.
- **4:16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**
- The author recorded the Word above. What does it mean that we approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and grace? ⇒ It teaches us that we can lead a life with confidence of joy even though we have trials and fights.
- Jesus, who is the High Priest, sits on the throne in heaven and makes an intercession to God for us. Therefore, we should walk with freedom, courage and confidence of joy. This is our Christian life in Jesus Christ.
- We have fights and surprising events in our life. However, we have the light of hope before us. God teaches us about the true and precious light through the Bible. Therefore, it is Good News.
- Most of the Israelites who left Egypt with Moses perished in the wilderness of Sinai. They couldn't enter into the Promised Land because they were not faithful to the Word of God. The author of the epistle made the Hebrews, his people, remember their attitudes. We have Jesus Christ who is the High Priest, even though we have surprises (painful things, trials) in our life.
- How about today's message? Do we have faith in confidence (with joy, freedom and courage)? If we do, we are happy. However, if we don't like it, what is the problem? God wants us to approach God's throne with confidence.

Conclusion

Title of the Message: "Approach God's Throne of Grace"

—A Secret to Overcome Difficulties—

- We surely have surprises (temptations and trials) in our life. However, we have Jesus Christ, the High Priest on the throne in heaven, even though our life is very hard. Jesus makes an intercession for us. Jesus Christ is not like Aaron but He is the true High Priest. Jesus offered His body, that was not an animal, to an altar of the cross. He didn't commit sin so that He didn't need an animal offering. However, Jesus Christ offered Himself because of our sin. There is nothing more precious than the grace of Jesus the High Priest.

- Today we studied the following two important things.
 - 1 . To hold firmly to the faith we profess

4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.
 - 2 . To approach God's throne of grace with confidence

4:16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

- * God bless you!